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CARPETS OF BAGDAD

By Harry B. Kennon.

TO be exact, that is, as exact as all that is impressionistic allows, it was the afternoon of July 15, 1915, the hour of passing of the army of men that made up the Archbishop's funeral procession—a great demonstration to one who in quiet, dignified, serving of his Master had won the love and veneration of the Master's sons everywhere. That current of life following, without music or any sound save the measured tramp of feet on the asphalt, in the wake of death, while all around the greater stream of life paused for the moment placid, was solemnly imposing and possessive.

"Courting sunstroke?" said the voice of a friend, as I felt his hand on my shoulder.

The heat was indeed intolerable; after days and days of rain the sun shone intently through aqueous veils hung in suspension which no breath of air disturbed.

"I've been watching you from my office window," continued my friend—indeed, the windows of the skyscrapers on either side the avenue were alive with humanity—"How long are you going to keep it up?"

I suppose my face showed some effort of mind to adjust myself to his companionship, as I used my handkerchief before putting on my hat, for he rattled on:

"Nothing more to see anyway; you can see fat Irishmen sweating any old time."

"Not in stovepipes and tailcoats," I remarked.

"Well, they're all alike anyhow," he said; and then came the expected—"Too hot to work. Let's hunt something cool."

We walked up the avenue towards Lake Michigan, slowly because of the thronged sidewalks, the silent procession still marching in the opposite direction. "Something cool" developed into a ruby-colored claret cup in which shone pale crescents of lemon and green spears of cucumber, served in a cavern all mirrors, mahogany, electric lights and electric fans. My friend is very modern, knows how and where to find his comfort.

A policeman, mopping the inside of his helmet, came in.

"Crowd off Michigan avenue yet?" inquired my friend.

"Most of it," said the heavily uniformed and perspiring man, "never saw such a bunch—jays from the country—women—"

"Hard to manage, eh?"

"Fiercest ever! No sense!" And then the big chap walked boldly up to the bar and ordered—a glass of buttermilk.

"Let's navigate," suggested my companion, "I've got something to show you—always a breeze in the Art Museum."

We passed out and on to Wabash avenue with its iron clang overhead of the elevated, its whizzing grind of surface cars, its warning honks of automobiles scattering the slowly disintegrating crowd no longer held placid by the procession. A splendid Turkish rug in a shop window caught

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my eye. Anyone ever bitten by the Oriental rug bug knows what happened to a man on the loose.

The Armenian who handled the collection was a wizard, the rug in his window a poor thing to what he had to show. Flattering the vanity of a collector he threw magnificent tapestries aside as mere rags and proceeded to spread, singly, two carpets.

And such carpets! The one was the color of a field of summer wheat at sunset, the "tree of life," woven into it in ripples from summer zephyrs, the flowers of the tree a perfume—a carpet of romance. The companion rug was much smaller, a siiken, metallic, night-like mystery not to be described. Under the Armenian's eyes I felt, somehow, a caliph of the Indies, rich enough to have that rug if all my costly carpets at home should be sacrificed. I asked the price.

And the price was as picturesque as the rug itself.

My friend led me gently away.

We reached Michigan boulevard where the remainder crowd was composed of summer guests from the country and people from the outlying districts to whom the procession was a sort of funeral fiesta: these mostly women clad in clothes of the grotesque cut of our period, harlequin of color, somehow blending into a moving harmony.

The breeze from the lake held aloof; the heat was oppressive.

My friend allowed me no pause in the galleries of the Museum, where always await me pictures beloved. No, indeed. He would not even allow me to enter the restful Dutch room, and, as for Inness—not today. He steered me away from the enticing summer loan collection with its glowing Turner, its Gainsboroughs, Sir Joshuas, cool Corots and what not. It was too hot to protest.

"Now, what do you know about that!" he exclaimed.

We stood in a "one man" room of exhibit—Albert Bloch, of Munich, the artist.

I gasped—the colors, the angles and swirls of color hit me between the eyes—the pain begotten of a first spoonful of ice cream when overheated.

"Well, say it," said my companion.

"Shut up," I replied, with the elegance of long intimacy, "I'm looking at this 'Still Life'."

"Where everything's on the jump. There's a jag in that crooked jug."

"Look at these 'Wrestlers,' can't you see how the struggle is in the mind of the crowd?"

"I get you—the strangle-hold. And the punch! Get next this Jack Johnson knock-out. Every one of those silk hats is agitated by the excitement and it."

The Boxers" was quite in my friend's line, but "Song of a Summer Night," painted in white of winter, "Adoration," with its baggy figures, and a magenta-colored thing, with more bagged humans, couldn't hold him. We paused before the portrait of a woman, grotesquely ugly.

"Matisse!" he exclaimed.

"Not at all," I replied, "Bloch is a knight, a Blue Knight, too chivalrous to deny a human subject humanity."

"Apology accepted; the thing is human—might have happened, in Munich. He's badly gone on clowns, isn't he?—and the Harlequin chap—"

"Maybe he looks on life as a harlequinda."

"With a stick in it. What do you make out of this?"

"Nothing today—perhaps another day—"

"That's the plague of the damn things, they call you back."

"This is a 'Night in Munich,'" I said, after passing other colorful conundrums.

"Oh, what a night!" was my chum's only comment.

"And here's another 'Night in Munich,' this smaller one. How . . ."

The Armenian had rolled up my rugs and stowed away, leaving me to gloat over my priceless possession, not anguished a particle by the fabulous sum I still owed him on the exchange. No hy of any kind reposed in the ornament of my content and I expected my friend momentarily to walk across the bare floors of my flat and join my rejoicing.

The exquisite, blue-black, darksome mystery spread out before me, skeleton palm branches pately curving and intercurving on its sheen as sea fronds wave in eastern oceans; white, golden-hearted lights, like the night perspective of a boulevard after rain, running across it like festive music; the jewel glitter of stars; the webs of spiders dew-gemmed in the starlight; and spiders in the webs—ah, spiders! lovely, misty women, with arms outstretched towards the scantily outlined men walking into the web. All there, all indefinite until it began to sing to you—"weihn, weihn und gesang," the same yesterday, now and forever.

My bell rang. I let my friend in, telling him of my wonder purchase, telling that I should call it "A Night in Munich," for in it I felt all the mystery of all the mysterious and dark past nights of the east, all the opalescent mystery of the nights of queen cities the world over at this moment of time.

"But where is it?" he asked, "where is it?"

"There!" I pointed exultantly. "There!"

"Are you gone bug-house?"

"Why—!"

My hands went fluttering about my head. The priceless rug was gone, the shine of the polished floor grinned at me.

"You'll never see your Armenian again," taunted my friend, "he had you hypnotized."

Then what I did I do not know, but it must have been edifying, for, uncontrolled, the beast in me roars obscenely. The loss of the wonderful carpet sounded itself in cursings, the loss of my own well-beloved treasures. And then, strangest of all, I became the victim of frightful depression, the enormous sum I owed the Armenian, though, of course, I could owe him nothing, grew and grew and repeatedly grew until I smothered under the obsession. I cursed the Armenian, cursed my friend, cursed the universe. . .

"But you never bought the blame thing, you know. It's not for sale."

The voice seemed to come from way back yonder where they make the thunder.

"My 'Night in Munich,'" I gasped.

"Your great aunt!" said the voice, and I knew

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